extinct species include an indeterminate species of stork, crane, pheasant, etc., besides the two extinct species already mentioned, and a Black Vulture, considered to be specifically distinct from the existing species and (in a footnote) named *Catharista occidentalis.*— J. A. A.

Ticehurst's 'A History of the Birds of Kent.'— The County of Kent, in the southeast of England, is an area of small extent, with a length of some 64 miles and an average breadth of about 26 miles. It is for the most part low, much of it below one hundred feet above sea-level and only small portions reach an elevation of 500 feet. It is, however, rich in bird life, which has had frequent historians, at least for portions of the County. Mr. Ticehurst states that "some eighteen books or pamphlets have been written dealing with the avifauna of the whole or a part of Kent or containing lists of birds that have been found in different districts," the first historian having been William Boys (1735–1803), who obtained the type specimens of the Sandwich Tern, the Dartford Warbler and the Kentish Plover, all described by Latham from specimens obtained by Boys at Sandwich, in Kent. Mr. Ticehurst, however, is the first to take up the work exhaustively, and to produce a monograph [1] that will long be the standard on the subject. An introduction of some 30 pages treats of the topography, geology, and vegetation, and the relation of these features to the avifauna; the local migration, number of species, the local museums and collections that contain Kentish specimens, and the work of former authors on the birds of Kent. From this we learn that the species entitled to be recognized as birds of Kent number 312, with 42 others whose claims to such recognition are considered doubtful, but which are presented in bracketed paragraphs. "Of the 107 species which breed regularly in Kent 37 are purely summer visitors and 70, whether migratory or not, may be found in the county throughout the year."

The main text takes up the species in systematic sequence, beginning with the Thrushes, with reference to their manner of occurrence in Kent, special consideration being given to the subject of their local movements and migrations. Following the names of each species references are given to the principal works on Kentish birds, citing the names only of the authors and page references to their works, which are listed, with their full titles, in a bibliography of the books and periodicals consulted (pp. xxv–xxix), while the original records, in the case of the rarer species, are cited in footnotes.

On casually turning the pages of the work one may be struck with the antiquated character of the technical nomenclature, but this is explained in the preface as follows: "With regard to the vexed questions of nomen-

[1] A History | of the Birds of Kent | By | Norman F. Ticehurst, | M. A., F. R. C. S., F. Z. S., M. B. O. U. | With twenty-four plates and a map | Witherby & Co.| 326 High Holborn London | 1909 — 8vo, pp. i-lvi + 1–568, 24 half-tone plates, and a large colored map. Price, 21s. net.

clature, for the convenience of those who practically confine their studies to British birds, that system has been adhered to, so far as possible, which was adopted by the late Howard Saunders in the second edition of his well-known 'Illustrated Manual of British Birds' [1899], together with the revisions made by the same author in his 'List of British Birds revised to July, 1907.'" The author so far departs from this system, however, as to admit trinomials where two or more races of the same species have occurred in Kent; and it is perhaps an open question whether it would not have been more in the interest of his local readers if he had also employed the approved modern technical names in place of those that merely recall a former phase of nomenclature, giving also, if considered desirable, the names preferred by Saunders. Otherwise how will the currently approved names of to-day ever become known to the class of readers the author is so solicitous to serve?

The "economic aspects" of the species are among the topics especially included within the author's scope, and on turning to his account of the Starling we find the followng statement, which seems of sufficient interest to warrant its presentation in the present connection, since we now have this bird with us, "for better or for worse." He says: "From an agricultural standpoint the Starling is a most useful and valuable bird, and it is important in a county like Kent that this should be thoroughly recognized; it is true that in the fruit-growing districts they do a considerable amount of damage to the cherry crop, and it appears desirable that their numbers in these districts should be kept within reasonable limits, and this is done by a systematic thinning every season, though in view of this bird's migratory habits this can only be effective if done in the breeding season. Elsewhere they do nothing but good, devouring enormous numbers of wireworm, cranefly and cockchafer larvæ, besides feeding at certain times of the year on the perfect insects themselves, particularly the cranefly. I for one offer them every encouragement in the way of nesting boxes, to which they very readily take."

In the British Islands and in western Europe the Starling is a migratory bird, the breeding birds of Kent, with their young beginning (at least in part) to leave late in July, and the autumn emigration is continued until the middle of September; while the "return of the summer breeding stock begins at the end of February and lasts throughout March to early April." The Starling is present, however, in Kent, as in other parts of England, throughout the year, the winter population arriving from central Europe mostly during October. It is interesting to note that the colonies of Starlings that have recently become established in the United States, particularly those about New York city, are non-migratory, merely assembling in flocks soon after the breeding season and extending their foraging trips to the nearby adjacent country.

In respect to the House Sparrow, Mr. Ticehurst considers the question of its being harmful or useful an open one — "one of the burning questions of the day"— and urges a scientific inquiry "under Government authority,

not only to thresh out the whole question, but, in the event, as seems probable, of an entirely adverse verdict being recorded against the bird, to specify definite methods for keeping its numbers within proper bounds." He adds, however, that "there seems to be hardly a crop that is grown that is not said to suffer more or less at some time of the year from the depredations of this bird."

The illustration of this excellent work comprise a large folding map of the County of Kent, colored to indicate altitude for each hundred feet from sea level to 500 feet; half-tone plates of the typical haunts of various species of birds, and of some of the rarer species; also facsimile reproductions of the original plates of the Dartford Warbler (from Pennant's 'Zoology,' 1776), the Cream-colored Courser (Latham's 'Synopsis,' 1785), the Kentish Plover (Lewin's 'Birds of Great Britain'), and the Sandwich Tern (Boys's 'History of Sandwich,' 1784), all drawn from specimens killed in Kent, and hence of special local interest.— J. A. A.

J. Grinnell on New North American Birds.— Two new North American Cowbirds marked the closing days of 1909, Mr. Grinnell, in a paper [1] bearing date December 31, 1909, describing a new form based on a series of eleven males from Humboldt County, Nevada, under the name *Molothrus ater artemisiæ*, while Dr. L. B. Bishop, in 'The Auk' for January, 1910 (mailed January 3), described as new a form from Saskatchewan as *Molothrus ater dwighti*. These two forms are both characterized as larger than the two previously recognized forms of this species (*ater ater* and *ater obscurus*), with a slenderer bill, but as not presenting any color differences. Whether the two new forms are separable from each other is not very clearly evident from the descriptions, since the measurements in the one case are given in millimeters and in the other in inches, rendering the reduction of the one system to the other necessary before a comparison can be made. This is unfortunate and should not be countenanced, especially since the metric system is now almost universally the standard in all scientific investigations except in ornithology, where the tendency in some instances is to adhere to an obsolete method for the convenience of the few who are willing to allow temporary inconvenience to outweigh and retard the adoption of a new but generally approved standard.

Mr. Grinnell contends that his new Great Basin form is derived from southern or Mexican stock — from *obscurus* rather than from *ater* — and we believe that few who have given consideration to parallel cases will disagree with him. We are surprised, however, at his attitude respecting the nomenclature of these and similarly allied forms in other groups. He says (in a footnote to p. 277): "As to the nomenclatural treatment of the

[1] A New Cowbird of the Genus *Molothrus*, with a note on the probable Genetic Relationships of the North American Forms. By Joseph Grinnell. University of California Publ., Zoöl., Vol. V, No. 5, pp. 275–281, 1 text figure. December 31, 1909.